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PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

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OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

CABINET SECRETARIAT

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GOVERNMENT HEADQUARTERS.  
ROSEAU.  
COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA.  
WEST INDIES.

11th July, 1983

My Dear Prime Minister:

I wish to address you on the critical problem facing the Banana Industry of the Windward Islands of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

As you are well aware, the Windward Islands supplied the United Kingdom market with about 57 per cent of its consumption requirement but due to persistent drought conditions in the 1970s and the devastating effects of two major hurricanes in 1979 and 1980 coupled with heavy unseasonal rains in 1981, the supply of bananas from the Windward Islands to the UK market fell sharply to about 34 per cent in 1982. It still constitutes by far the largest single supply source of bananas to the UK consumer, and with concerted efforts and commitment, the annual exportable volume is now rising from 90,000 tonnes to 120,000 tonnes by the end of 1983.

This improvement has been due largely to continuing financial and technical support from Her Majesty's Government to the Banana Development Programme which has been in operation for five years and has received further support based on a review of performance.

In addition, the Banana Industry of the Windward Islands contributes significantly to export earnings, ranging from 44 per cent in the case of Dominica to 20 per cent in the case of Grenada - approximately 43 per cent of the aggregate of the exports from the Windward Islands for the period 1976 - 1978.



It also employs, directly or indirectly approximately, 34 - 40 per cent of the total population. This demonstrates quite clearly the importance of the industry to the economic survival of the Windward Islands and sharpens the vital role that the UK Government should continue to play as a traditional AID Donor in enabling the Windward Islands to see their way through Independence by expanding trade with the required support from Her Majesty's Government.

The resilience and determination of our farmers to overcome the setbacks of the 1970s and the adverse forces of nature strengthened by the upsurge in improvements of our fruit quality through additional hard work by our small and medium-scale farmers, makes it even more important for us to jointly place the Industry on a sound and secure footing, both at the level of production and marketing. The British consumers also value our bananas due to its small size and sweeter taste.

Our Governments recognise the assistance that has been given to secure the market through the necessary safeguards of protection on the UK's accession to the Treaty of Rome. We are, however, cognizant of the growing pressures on this form of protectionism. However, should this be eroded, the economic foundation of our countries would collapse since efforts at diversification of the economic base are still in its early stages and the purpose of current British Aid will have been negated.

We are mindful of the Judicial Review which is pending on the method of operating the licensing scheme. Because of our concern over the threat to the Windward Islands Banana Industry posed by the legal challenge to the current licensing scheme operated by the UK Government and the speed of developments with respect to the various proceedings, we are proposing that a high level delegation of the Prime



Ministers of the Governments of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines visit the UK, before the date set for the pending Judicial Review, to discuss with your Government the issues in detail and overall situation so that some meaningful, reassuring and lasting solution could be found.

We trust that it will be convenient for you to meet us for that purpose, at a date which is convenient to you.

Yours faithfully



M EUGENIA CHARLES

Prime Minister

The Right Honourable  
Mrs Margaret Thatcher  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
ENGLAND